

- Acknowledge and respect tribal sovereignty.
- Achieve a settlement that is fair to both the Indian community and the general public.
- Achieve the most resource-efficient settlement of claims (in terms of conserving federal government and tribal time, money, and staff).
- Encourage settlement by providing incentives to settle and disincentives to litigate.
- Use the most informal settlement processes available rather than litigation to encourage tribal participation.
- Obtain funding for the settlement without reducing appropriations for the BIA and Special Trustee budgets and tribal programs.
- Achieve agreement on account balances through September 30, 1992, or the date of settlement, as an agreed-upon starting point for the future.

The Department's Recommendations build on the legislative options for settlement that the Department submitted to Congress on December 11, 1996, and that we sent to you at the same time. After submitting the options to Congress, the Department consulted with and provided an opportunity for written comments from tribal representatives throughout the country about the approaches we were considering. A copy of the Report on the Recommendations of the Department was distributed to all Tribal Leaders on November 13, 1997.

All oral comments presented by tribes and individuals at these consultation meetings will be recorded and transcribed.

Summaries of the meetings will be available for public inspection and copying ten days following the meeting.

Dated: January 23, 1998.

**Kevin Gover,**

*Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

#### Order of Temporary Closure to Non-Authorized Use of Certain Public Lands in Ward Valley, San Bernardino County, CA

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Needles Field Office.

**ACTION:** Order of temporary closure to non-authorized uses of public lands.

**SUMMARY:** This order closes approximately 2,000 acres within Ward Valley, California to all uses, including

but not limited to camping, motorized vehicle use, recreation, and casual use, unless those uses are otherwise specifically authorized by the Bureau of Land Management. This closure does not affect uses authorized by any right-of-way, permit, or other valid authorization approved by the BLM authorized officer for the public lands described in this order, except that the existing protest encampment maintained by the Fort Mojave Tribe under BLM permit CA-37890 shall be relocated to site E, as described in permit CA-37890, consistent with the terms provided in permit CA-37890. No activities authorized by the encampment permit shall be undertaken outside the cleared area of site E on any lands closed pursuant to this notice. The closure covers the following public lands:

T. 9 N., R. 19 E., SBM  
 Sec 22, S $\frac{1}{2}$ ;  
 Sec 23, W $\frac{1}{2}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec 26, W $\frac{1}{2}$  of W $\frac{1}{2}$ ;  
 Sec 27, all;  
 Sec 34, all;  
 Sec 35, W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ .

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** The closure will become effective February 13, 1998 and will remain effective for a period of six months from the effective date, unless terminated earlier through an order reopening the lands upon completion of the drilling activities referenced below.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The purpose of this temporary closure is to ensure that drilling and related activities to be undertaken by the Department of the Interior and the California Department of Health Services pursuant to a decision record issued January 16, 1998, at the Ward Valley site are carried out under conditions which will ensure public safety, promote site security, and provide for integrity of the sampling activities. Authority for this closure may be found in Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8364.1. The closure effected by this order is the minimum necessary for effective law enforcement because it is the minimum which will allow for control of access from Interstate 40.

This closure was analyzed in environmental assessment CA-069-EA7-42. The closure is within the scope of the Finding of No Significant Impacts prepared on EA CA-069-EA7-42. The impacts identified were temporary and minor.

This order constitutes the final decision of the Department.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Molly Brady, Field Manager, U.S. D.I., Bureau of Land Management, Needles Field Office, 101 West Spikes Road,

Needles, California 92363, tel: (760) 326-7000.

Approved: January 26, 1998.

**Bob Armstrong,**

*Assistant Secretary, Lands and Minerals Management.*

[FR Doc. 98-2312 Filed 1-27-98; 9:02 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[WY-985-0777-66]

#### Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Coalbed Methane Development Projects South of Gillette, Wyoming

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Coalbed Methane Development Projects South of Gillette, Wyoming, in Campbell County.

**SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) must analyze the impacts of actions we permit on Federal lands and minerals. As part of this analysis, the cumulative affects of the proposed action and other activities occurring in the area must be considered. Three Environmental Assessments (EA) (Pistol Point, Marquiss, and Lighthouse) and one Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (Gillette South) to address proposed coalbed methane (CBM) development have been completed for the area south of Gillette. When we completed the EIS in October of 1997, the apparent success of the coalbed methane play was drawing additional operators into the basin.

Feedback we received from industry indicated we could see an additional 2,600 to 3,000 CBM wells south of Gillette by the year 2007 if development success continues as it has been. With this information, BLM decided another EIS would be necessary to address this additional interest.

**DATES:** Comments to be considered in the draft EIS should be submitted by March 2, 1998. The draft EIS should be available for public review by October of 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Questions or concerns should be addressed to Richard Zander in the BLM Buffalo Resource Area Office, 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, WY 82834.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Richard Zander, phone 307-684-1100.